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A Portrait Of The Princesse De Lamballe

by JOHN SHAPLEY

Among engraved portraits of eighteenth century women those of the Princesse de Lamballe nearly equal in popularity those of her unfortunate queen, Marie-Antoinette. Although there are engravings of her during her later more stirring years, it is especially a youthful portrait which has captivated the imaginations of men (Pl. VIII, fig. 1). This it is which with the slight variations due to reengraving appears over and over again in the books dealing with the life of the princess—and such books are legion. No other portrait has seemed so well to express the charming personality of her who for loyalty to the queen suffered martyrdom in the revolution of 1792.

In France the revolution put an end to the abundance of paintings which should have immortalized the fairness of this flower of the court, Marie-Thérèse-Louise de Savoie-Carignan, Princesse de Lamballe, and when the French press began once more to idolize the heroines of the *ancien régime* it was to the engravings that they must turn for illustration of the beauty that had been. Indeed, the great loss in the matter of painted portraits is but emphasized by the poor few that remain. The Musée Condé at Chantilly possesses a certain unattractive sketch of a callow girl (Pl. VIII, fig. 2) without any of the fascination of the engraved portrait. At Versailles, where the bright career of the princess reached its apogee, there are three pictures to be seen—or rather found, for two do not merit exhibition and are not hung. (For access to the pictures in storage and for help and guidance in this complicated problem of eighteenth century iconography, M. Pierre de Nolhac, the master of the subject, must be thanked.) The one portrait which is exhibited at Versailles is anonymous



PROVIDENCE, BROWN UNIVERSITY: PORTRAIT OF THE PRINCESSE DE LAMBALLE, BY ANGELICA KAUFFMAN.



Fig. 1—DE BOURBON CONTI.
Les Bourbons Martyrs: EN-
GRAVED PORTRAIT, BY B. ROGER.



Fig. 2—CHANTILLY, MUSÉE
CONDÉ: PORTRAIT SKETCH BY
CARMONTELLE.



Fig. 3—VERSAILLES, MUSÉE
NATIONAL: PORTRAIT, BY AN
UNKNOWN ARTIST.

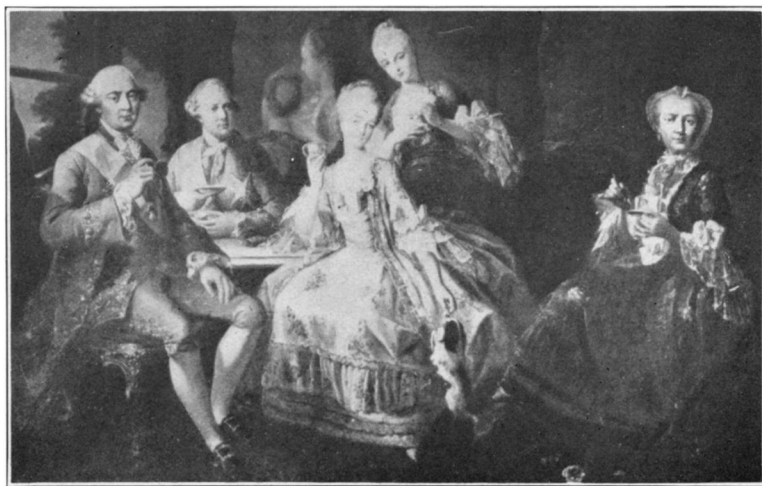


Fig. 4—VERSAILLES, MUSÉE NATIONAL: LA TASSE DE CHOCOLAT, BY L. E.
RIOULT.

but is held to be certainly a representation of the princess (Pl. VIII, fig. 3). For some reason, however, it has not struck the fancy of the wielders of the burin, and it is, therefore, not so popularly known, in spite of its location, as is the ubiquitous engraving, which it resembles sufficiently in physiognomy and carriage though the pose and costume differ. The two portraits in storage at Versailles are insignificant works of the nineteenth century. One was fabricated, using the youthful engraved portrait as a basis, by L. E. Rioult (born 1780) in the days of Louis Philippe; it deserves no attention whatever. The other is a family group entitled *La Tasse de Chocolat* (Pl. VIII, fig. 4). The painting is but a wooden copy after a picture by Carl Vanloo belonging to the Orléans family and it presents the likenesses of five members of the family of the Duc de Penthièvre: the duke himself, his son, daughter-in-law, daughter, and mother. The mother was dead before the daughter-in-law, the Princesse de Lamballe, came to France to enter the family circle, but though her portrait is posthumous she seems scarcely more lifeless than her companions in the picture. Even the princess, despite a feigned physical animation as she holds up the cup of chocolate with one hand and reaches down to the dog with the other, is as lacking in spirit as the rest. Little evidence can be drawn from such a feeble attempt at portraiture, but, as far as it goes, there is a general resemblance to the engraved portrait, without, however, the slightest possibility that the latter goes back to Vanloo's picture.

Outside of France it is obviously more difficult to know what portraits may be preserved. There is one in the royal palace at Turin. Since it still belongs to the family of Savoie-Carignan—Mme. de Lamballe's own family has now become the reigning house of Italy—it has a straight pedigree; but it is not of the pose and costume of the engraving.

There is yet another painting of the princess, the one which has provoked this paper, in the Brown University collection, to which it came with the Harris bequest. It agrees with the engraving. The picture is small

(8 x 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches), in oil, on panel. The artist's signature, executed with the same dash and color as the feathery dress, is unobtrusively written vertically along the edge of the dress toward the lower left hand corner: "A Kauffman" (Pl. VII).

The bust of the princess is turned in three-quarters view to the left; the head is turned slightly to the right. Her blonde hair is dressed in the high fashion of the day with curls at the sides. She wears a small hat decorated with foliage and pink roses. Her yellowish dress, cut low at the neck, which displays a string of pearls, is trimmed with ruffles of lace and a blue bow of ribbon. Mme. de Lamballe sat to other artists, among them Fragonard and Mme. Vigée LeBrun. But it is the type found in this painting and in the corresponding engraving that accords best with what we know of her gentle devoted character. The oval face, narrow and rounded forehead, long nose, small eyes, sensitively half open lips, cylindrical neck, and sloping shoulders are like the corresponding features in the Turin portrait and not very unlike those in the Chantilly and Versailles pictures. The pictures agree in giving the princess light eyes while in the particular engraving which I am reproducing (Pl. VIII, fig. 1) they appear to be dark. In this respect as well as in some details of costume closer correspondence could be found in other editions of the engraving.

In view of such an infinitesimal variation between the painting and the engraving it seems impossible that the two should not be connected. Yet there is a doubt on this point raised by the legend that accompanies two editions of the engraved portrait. The engraving in De Bourbon Conti's *Les Bourbons Martyrs* (Paris, 1821) has the signature, *Drouais père pinxit—By Roger sculpsit* (Pl. VIII, fig. 1). The one, reversed, used as the second frontispiece in an 1826 publication of Mme. de Lamballe's memoirs of the royal family of France bears the legend *Pla Dautel sc. d'après Drouais—By Roger Direxit*. No such picture by Drouais is recorded and we may assume that Roger is in both cases responsible for the ascription to Drouais. The second volume of

the same memoirs has another engraving of our portrait, not reversed, with only the legend *Bosselman sc.*; and with the omission of Roger's name goes that of the artist by whom he had supposed the portrait to be. But that the ascription to Drouais was not made by transcribing an artist's signature is shown by the differing versions of the name on the two engravings and further by the fact that not one of the three painter members of the Drouais family signed himself *Drouais père*. The three generations of the family were Hubert Drouais (1699-1767), François-Hubert Drouais (1727-1775), and Jean-Germain Drouais (1763-1788). The second signed himself during his father's lifetime *Drouais fils*. One would expect it to be to distinguish the first that Roger added the designation *père*. But this elder Drouais could not have painted the princess, since he died less than a week after her arrival in Paris, to which she came from Turin to become the bride of the French prince. (The princess reached Paris February 3, 1767. It was not until four days later that she was presented at court. Meanwhile, February 6, Hubert Drouais suffered a final stroke of paralysis, and February 9 he died.) That the second Drouais may have painted her is much more likely, in fact the portrait exhibited at Versailles might be by him, for he was the popular court painter during the early years of her prominence at court. Even so, that would not justify the engraver's ascription, for the third Drouais (whose career was too short to achieve court distinction or to reflect lustre on father and grandfather and of whom Roger may very easily have been ignorant) was but twelve when his father, *Drouais fils*, died, without, therefore, ever becoming known in turn as a second *Drouais père*. Further, the Brown University panel bears no resemblance to the smooth, academic style of Drouais. And to suppose that Kauffman signed as if original her copy of another artist's work is impossible, considering her independent popularity precisely as a portrait painter.

It is not likely that any of the engravings we know of the portrait were made directly from the original

painting by Kauffman; since the earlier Roger engraving mentioned above is not reversed, as an engraving from a painting normally was at that time, it had presumably another engraving that was reversed as its basis; and it may be added that the later (1826) engraving which was directed by Roger and doubtless re-copied from his earlier engraving is, as would be expected, reversed again. Neither is it necessary that the engraved portrait originated from the particular panel at Brown University, for the "divine" Angelica, like other artists, sometimes had to make replicas of her portraits, and the modest dimensions of this panel suggest that it may be either a reduced replica of, or a small study for, a large portrait, which may yet turn up in some British collection.

In the memoirs of the Princesse de Lamballe, which, although strictly speaking apocryphal, are based on authentic material, and are, therefore, a fundamental historical source, we find neither mention of Angelica Kauffman nor definite reference to any visit in England during the artist's residence there (1766-1781). But only two years later, in 1783, in connection with the influx of English into France, we read (page 223 in the 1895 edition): "Among the queen's favorites . . . was the good Lady Spencer, with whom I became most intimately acquainted when I first went to England; and from whom, as well as from her two charming daughters, the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Duncannon, since Lady Besborough [Sic: Frederick Ponsonby, Viscount Duncannon, did not become third Earl of Bessborough till 1793.], I received the greatest marks of cordial hospitality. In consequence, when her ladyship came to France, I hastened to present her to the queen." The expression, "when I first went," indicates long or repeated sojourning across the channel. In all probability, then, the princess visited England while Kauffman was there. Lady Spencer and her daughters were, as is well known, among the most enthusiastic patronesses of the artist. Further, the age of the sitter agrees with this period. Born in 1749, she was thirty-two before the artist left England. Later portraits show her stout,

almost coarse. In the Brown University picture the technique is precisely that of Kauffman's English period, and closest counterparts are found in the portraits of the daughters of Lady Spencer just mentioned. Our painting reveals the familiar stamp of Kauffman's peculiarities of brushwork and color. The quite modern manner of painting with separate dashes of almost pure colors, the courtly pose, the soft treatment of drapery, and the suggestive indication of details are the characteristics that have made her slight portrait sketches, though turned off hastily as pot-boilers, more to the modern taste than her bloodless ambitious undertakings.